

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 22, 2003

Contact: Cory Fong
(701) 328-3660

JAEGER: ELECTION REFORM PLANNING UNDERWAY IN NORTH DAKOTA

BISMARCK, ND – Secretary of State Al Jaeger announced today that North Dakota's State HAVA Planning Committee held its first meeting. The committee is part of a process for implementing federally mandated election reforms, which will result in significant changes and improvements to North Dakota's election process. Jaeger is the state's chief election official.

According to Jaeger, the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) requires each state to develop a statewide plan for implementing election reform and allocating the associated federal moneys. North Dakota has already received federal funds of five million dollars and expects to receive another four million dollars by the end of the year.

The eighteen-member State HAVA Planning Committee, appointed by Jaeger, includes county and local election officials along with representation from the disability and senior citizen communities, the tribes, the technology sector, voter interest groups, and private citizens.

"The state planning process is critical to the success of our election reform effort in North Dakota," said Jaeger. "Not only will our state plan set the direction and approach for effective and innovative election improvements in our state, the resulting plan will touch and impact every citizen."

During the State HAVA Planning Committee's organizational meeting, the group reviewed a preliminary plan tailored to North Dakota's particular needs. It was drafted by a steering committee comprised of staff from the Secretary of State's office and the North Dakota Association of Counties along with several County Auditors. Throughout the summer, the state committee will be meeting to finalize a plan that must be submitted to the newly created Federal Election Administration Commission and be published in the Federal Register. Mike Montplaisir, the Cass County Auditor, is chairing the state planning committee.

To assist in the implementation of the election reforms, Jaeger also announced that his office is partnering with the North Dakota Association of Counties to manage and facilitate the state planning process.

"Counties must play an important role in the implementation of HAVA in North Dakota," said Jaeger. "The NDACo brings valuable resources and expertise to the process that the state could not otherwise provide. More importantly, working together, hand-in-hand, with county government and the Association demonstrates a mutual respect and trust between the state and counties that is essential for successfully fulfilling the goals of HAVA."

"The Association is pleased to offer our assistance and expertise toward this worthwhile and meaningful effort," said Mark Johnson, Executive Director of the NDACo. "We believe that the state of North Dakota and Secretary Jaeger are taking a unique approach in reaching out to our

Secretary of State News
May 22, 2003
Page two

counties, through the Association, to set the course for making these improvements. And I believe it will ultimately prove to be the right approach.”

Jaeger says that while HAVA presents North Dakota with many challenges, it provides even more opportunities.

“The work of the State HAVA Planning Committee will undoubtedly be challenging, but it will also be extremely rewarding and fruitful and will lead to meaningful changes to our state’s election process,” said Jaeger. “I am thankful for the hard work, responsibility, and dedication state planning members and the NDACo are committed to. I have great confidence in their work and look forward to their efforts and expertise resulting in a plan that will enhance the integrity of the election process in North Dakota and make us a leader in election reform.”

###